

*The right Improvement of Divine Judgments.*

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A  
S E R M O N

occasioned by

A  
D R E A D F U L - E X P L O S I O N  
Of G U N - P O W D E R,  
in *Chester.*

Whereby a Company, assembled at a Puppet-  
Show, was blown up; and many killed, and  
wounded,

N O V E M B E R 5<sup>th</sup>. 1772.

*Published at Request,* K

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By JOSEPH JENKINS. A. M.

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*O that they were wise, that they understood this,  
that, they would consider their latter-end!*  
*Deut. 32. 29<sup>th</sup>.*

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W R E X H A M:

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## ADVERTISEMENT.

*THE following Sermon is with diffidence, submitted to the perusal of the serious and candid Reader. It was preached in WREXHAM the Lord's-day Evening that immediately succeeded the Dreadful-explosion in CHESTER. The Author hopes that it was not without some good effect, on those, that heard it; and he has been perswaded, from the same motive, to make it publick, earnestly wishing, that it may be seriously attended to; and that the very awakening Providence, which occasioned it, may not be forget.*



ISAIAH. 26th. 9th. VERSE, the latter part.

*When thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the World will learn righteousness.*

**W**HAT I propose from these words, is to offer you a few hints, delivered in the plainest Manner, but which may notwithstanding, be of the greatest use, and instruction to each of you. May GOD assist me, and apply the word to your consciences! let us look up to him for his blessing, and say, every one for himself, LORD may it not be in vain that I hear thy word this evening! after so many reproofs refused by me in former times, O! let not *this* reproof be lost upon me! AMEN! May GOD grant it for the sake of his SON'S Kingdom; and for the sake of your precious, and immortal Souls.

Upon hearing the text, it will be obvious to many of you, what induced me to chuse such a subject, for your present meditation: It occurred to me, upon hearing of that very awful disaster, which happened in *Chester*, last *Thursday* evening.

A company of unthinking Creatures were met together; for what? Not to serve GOD---Not to Worship the Most-High---Not to seek the Salvation of their Souls,---Not to bless the Lord, that,



on the *fifth of November*, he saved the King and Parliament of ENGLAND, from being blown up by Gun-powder, thro' the Malice and cruelty, of our Popish Enemies; they were alas! not met together for these, or any other *good* purposes; but (sad to think of!) were met to see a Puppet-Show,----to sport themselves with Sin,----to laugh at profaneness,----to serve the Devil; when, in the midst of their diversion; in the midst of all the Iniquity, ah! what sudden mischief seized them! how dreadful the shock! and what a number of poor wretches, were by the explosion, blown up into the air; or crushed under the ruins, of the house that contained them! An unlooked-for Stop, was put to all their mirth, and many of them, instantly left the world. How unexpected the transition from time to eternity! they were one minute laughing at the Puppet-Show, and the next, about to appear before God, and answer to him, for what they had done in the body.

The particular cause of this dreadful calamity, has not yet transpired; it is very difficult, to determine upon, and of no importance for me, in a discourse of this nature, to enquire into: Neither do I mean to insinuate any thing, concerning the present state, of those that perished in the calamity; nothing is farther from my thoughts: They have passed before *God the Judge of all*, and I am forbid to conjecture about them.<sup>a</sup> My business is not with the dead, but with the living. O that *they* may lay it to their hearts! It is no improper

<sup>a</sup> Matt. 7. 1.

question



question, and I beg leave to put it, to each of you in this assembly, "Which of you, my friends, would *now* like to have been at *this* Puppet-Show"; Such wicked diversions many of you have taken pleasure in. With pity, have I seen you flocking to them; but suppose you had been there, when the Gun-powder blew up the house, and the people therein? How would you like to have shared in the distress? What if while *you* \* were viewing this impious Show, some awful disaster had happened to *you*, as happened in *Chester*? What if the house had fallen upon you? What if the devouring flames had seized it, and destroyed you? Is it a place that a Man would chuse to die in? Put yourselves then, in the case of the poor wretches who were blown up, and ask, "Had it been *you* instead of *them*, what would have become of you? If you had been thus, hurried to another world; in what state would Death have found you, and whither would it have taken you?"

This Brethren is a subject, that calls for your deepest, your most earnest attention; and my text delivers it as a general assertion, that "*When the Judgments of GOD are in the earth, the inhabitants of the World will learn Righteousness.*" That there is very important instruction, to be learnt from such dispensations; that they come not out of the dust, neither do they spring out of the ground; but are sent with a view, to teach Men a lesson exceeding useful, for them to learn." May God

by his Holy-Spirit, make the Providence we have been speaking of thus useful !----Without entering into the connexion, of the words with the context ; my design in speaking from them is,

I. To take notice of *some* of the ways of Providence in the earth, which are properly called *Judgments* ; and,

II. To enquire what instruction such dispensations do afford us. I say,

I. To mention *some* of the ways of Providence in the Earth, which are properly termed *Judgments* ; It would be a vain attempt to enumerate them all, what I mean is to remind you only of *some* which Scripture, which Reading or our own Observation, may have given us information of.----If it be asked then, "What is meant by a judgment"? 'Tis answered, "any awful instance of correction or punishment, sent either to reclaim the sufferers themselves, or to make them warnings to others, or for both these purposes". When great distress has been brought on whole nations, or on particular persons, for their behaviour ; when these corrections or punishments, have come in some very sudden and unexpected manner, at the same time perhaps, strongly marking the fault for which they were sent ; or when the punishment is the direct consequence of the crime, these are, in the sense of the text, judgments, I hope I shall not be mistaken, however, by this that every instance  
of

of sudden death, or that those dealings of Providence, which People in common-Language, unmeaningly call *accidents*, are to be esteemed judgments on the persons afflicted by them; I have no such meaning. Sometimes we have seen Men about their proper calling in life, getting an honest living, it may be doing good to their fellow creatures, yet while so doing, hurt themselves, break their bones, or drop down dead; We would not say, that these Providences were judgments upon them, for minding their business, or doing good to others. Ministers have dropped down dead while preaching, and people have died in hearing; and tho' such instances of mortality are very awakening, and ought to put Men upon considering their latter-end; yet no reasonable person would call them by the name of judgments. The case *here* is very different.--- When Men are sinning and hardening their hearts against GOD---When they are indulging themselves in any kind of wickedness, and some terrifying calamity comes upon them,---Death perhaps suddenly arrests them,---They are stopped by the Stroke of GOD's hand,---That is surely a judgment from GOD; and tho' it certainly requires great caution in determining, concerning particular cases, yet (forgive me if I am uncharitable, I would not be so if I knew it, but) there is something, so visible and alarming, of the footsteps of Providence, in the very melancholy scene, we are now discoursing of; a Providence which surpris'd a number of thoughtless sinners,



in the midst of their sinful pleasure ; and sent so many of them into Eternity ; that tho' I most heartily sympathize with the afflicted, I cannot look upon the cause of their trouble, in any other light than as such an awful warning.

“ *The whole was accidental*, it will possibly be said ; nor do I imagine that it happened from design, or from any supernatural cause : But I ask *what is an accident ?* Those things which appear to us contingent, we call accidental, for this plain reason, that thro' the scantiness and imperfection of our faculties, we are not able to foresee them ; but with GOD nothing can be contingent, nothing can be accidental. ¶ If it be true, that *not a Sparrow falleth to the ground without GOD*,<sup>a</sup> a sure events of greater consequence, must be subject to his direction. *Shall there be evil in a City, and the Lord hath not done it ?*<sup>b</sup> asked one Prophet ; and another answers the question, *Who is he that saith, and it cometh to pass when the Lord commandeth it not ?*<sup>c</sup> If then it was no accident, but under the guidance of a particular Providence, what was it ? No Man will pronounce it an indication of Mercy ; and if it was, neither an accident, nor a token of Mercy, I beg to know by what name I shall denominate it. For nothing,

was

¶ Mr Locke confessed, that he knew not how to reconcile, the foreknowledge of GOD, and the interposition of his Providence, with human liberty respecting worldly matters ; and yet he had no doubt of the Doctrine. *Letter to Mr Molyneux ; and Lord Lyttleton on the conversion of St. Paul.* page 104.

<sup>a</sup> Mat. 10. 29. <sup>b</sup> Amoz. 3. 6. <sup>c</sup> Lam 3. 37.

was this terrible desolation permitted? Is there no voice in it to surrounding Spectators? O Yes! there is a most affecting call in it, to each of us; *The Lords voice crieth to the City*; the Man of wisdom will *hear the rod and him who hath appointed it:*<sup>a</sup> He that disregards the voice of Providence, despises the voice of the most High, and lives *without GOD in the World,*<sup>b</sup>

The nature of the entertainment, which the unhappy creatures attended on, seems to justify, my expressing myself so strongly, respecting the *sad end* of it.----I make no scruple, with the greatest confidence to say, "that Plays and Puppet-Shows, and such like exhibitions, are so far from promoting religion and virtue; that they are the nurseries of Sin; they are altogether inconsistent with religion and morality; with the glory of GOD; and a true concern for the Salvation of our souls: such diversions, on the contrary, encrease the general dissoluteness, and irreligion of the age; they are the ruin of our youth; and add to the heavy guilt of this unhappy land. The English Theatre is the School of Satan; it consists principally, of *that filthiness, and foolish talking and jesting* || which, an Apostle tells us are *by no means*

a Micah. 6. 9. b Eph 2. 12.

|| *Lewd turns, or double entendre*, as the original word may import; a mode of speech, which some people are simple enough to think *ingenious and witty*, at the same time, that it conveys an *unclean and immodest idea*. Those Plays which are most approved of, and Writings which are most acceptable to the *polite World* (VIZ. Swift Sterne &c.) are full of these *indelicate double Meanings*.

*means* proper or *convenient*; <sup>a</sup> as it's aim is to please the multitude, so it suits it's amusements, to the depraved manners of the Times; it has a direct tendency to debauch men's minds; to lessen men's awe of the great GOD; to Steel the conscience; and inflame the lusts, and wicked passions of the heart. And the Puppet-Show performances are still more vile: Tis well known that they are chiefly made up, of low wit and indecency, obscene jests, profaneness and mockery of matters, most solemn and serious. Such, if Fame says true, was the conduct of this very Puppet-Show, of which the Gun-powder made a fatal conclusion; and judge you, from this account of things, whether the *fearful catastrophe* has not much the look, of being permitted by the Almighty, as an *intended warning* to other people. O that they were but wise, to believe, and duly consider it!

From what has been said then, it will be evident, that the grand cause of such distresses, and indeed of any other affliction whatever, is *Sin*;---*Sin* which has marred, and defaced the creation of GOD---*Sin* which brought bitterness with it, wherever it came---*Sin* which is so abominable in the sight of the Lord, and has been so very destructive to mankind. O! in how many awful ways has GOD shewn his displeasure at *sin*! In how many awful ways has he inflicted correction, and punishment for it! should a godly man fall into it, he will find to his cost, that it is

<sup>a</sup> Eph. 5. 4.

no



no light matter to offend GOD. If GOD's own people (who are the subjects of his love, and called by his grace) at any time forsake his ways, he will bring them back with tears; He will *chasten their transgressions with a rod, and their iniquity with stripes*: <sup>a</sup> Tho' he forgives their Sins, yet will he take vengeance on their inventions.--And O! by how many awful methods, has GOD in every age, corrected and punished wicked men for Sin! Some time after the creation, the whole world became so impious, that the BIBLE tells "us, it repented GOD that he made Man, and he said, *My Spirit shall not always strive with Men*", <sup>b</sup> and what followed? Why, the *Deluge* overwhelmed the whole world, and all the human-race except Noah and his family, perished by water,--they were drowned in the midst of the deep.----It was in vain that they climbed to the top of the Trees for shelter, the water was above the Trees---It was in vain that they fled to the tops of the Mountains; the water was above the Mountains----It was in vain that they cried to one another for help, no help could be afforded----It was in vain that they uttered shrieks and cries to Heaven for Mercy; the Door was shut; the GOD that made them would then have no mercy on them. Was not this a dreadful judgment of GOD for sin?

And so too, when Sodom and Gomorrha dared to provoke GOD; What was the end of their wickedness? Why, Sodom and Gomorrha, and

<sup>a</sup> Ps. 89. 32.    <sup>b</sup> Gen. 6. 3. 6.

and all the Cities concerned in their guilt, were burnt up. *The Lord rained fire from Heaven upon them; and the smoke of the Country went up as the smoke of a furnace;* <sup>a</sup> GOD destroyed them with one undistinguished ruin; and only Lot and his two daughters were saved. Before the Destruction came, the inhabitants were warned, but they believed not; they *vexed the righteous soul of Lot,* <sup>b</sup> and mocked at his reproofs, as at the dreams of a mad man; but when it was come, it was too late to prevent it----too late to escape from it---- Ah! the anguish and distraction! the heart-rending cries, and dismal groans of the wretched victims, while the fire surrounded them on all sides, and it was impossible to flee from it! What would they in that hour methinks have given for their lives! How acceptable *then* would a place of safety have been! But in vain they wished; in vain they would have hoped; the conflagration was general, and their Death inevitable!----

Read also, the judgments of GOD upon Egypt for their Sins; Pharaoh and the Egyptians hardened their hearts against GOD; disobeyed his commands; refused to let Israel go; and a variety of plagues immediately followed: *GOD sent darkness and made it dark over all the land--- He turned their waters into blood and slew their fish---Their land brought forth frogs in abundance* in

<sup>a</sup> Gen. 19. 24. 28.      <sup>b</sup> 2 Pet. 2. 8.

*“in the chambers of their Kings---He spake, and  
 “there came divers sorts of flies; and lice in all their  
 coasts---He gave them hail for rain, and flaming fire  
 in their land---He smote their vines also, and figtrees  
 and all the trees of their coasts.---He spake, and the  
 locusts came, and caterpillars, and that without  
 number, and did eat up all the herbs in their land,  
 and devoured the fruit of the ground.---He smote  
 also all the first born, and in one night slew all the  
 chief of their strength; <sup>a</sup> and lastly, he drown-  
 ed Pharaoh and his Host in the Red-Sea---This  
 it is to Sin against God. Evil always befall such  
 disobedient persons.*

The Canaanites and Amorites and other  
 Idolatrous Nations, with whom Israel con-  
 tended, after their journey thro' the wilder-  
 ness; when their Iniquity was full, and ripe  
 for punishment; received that punishment  
 which they deserved: It was the command of  
 God to the Israelites, *“of the Cities of these peo-  
 ple thou shalt save nothing alive that breatheth; but  
 thou shalt utterly destroy them, that they teach you  
 not to do after all their abominations, which they  
 have done unto their gods.”* <sup>b</sup> And the Children  
 of Israel themselves, notwithstanding all the af-  
 fliction God expressed for them, for Abraham  
 their father's sake, yet reaped the bitter fruit of  
 their Sin, whenever they dared to rebel: Often  
 did they turn aside, and as often were they chas-  
 tised; till at length, Divine vengeance being  
 roused by repeated provocations, their City and  
 temple

<sup>a</sup> Ps. 105. 28—36.    <sup>b</sup> Deut. 20. 16. 18.



temple were burnt by Nebuchadnezzar, and they were carried into a Seventy years captivity; and still more aggravated misery did they at last feel: Having to their other crying Sins, added that of hatred and rejection of the gospel---Having with wicked hands crucified and slain the Lord Jesus Christ; <sup>a</sup> exactly as our Blessed Lord foretold, *their house was left unto them desolate*,---<sup>b</sup> *their enemies the Romans came upon their City, and cast a trench about it, compassed it round about, beset it on every side, and laid it even with the ground*: <sup>c</sup> There fell in the siege, about eleven hundred thousand souls;---the rest were dispersed thro' all nations; having never been able to unite together, nor incorporate with other nations; but remain a distinct, tho' a scattered people;---a standing Monument of the justice of God, and the sure fulfillment of his threatnings.

Were we to trace the Histories of other countries, they would furnish us with abundant proofs of the same sort. Nor is our own History destitute of such examples: At different times, God has visited this Island, with fire and sword; with plague and pestilence; with foreign troubles; and with civil broils; and when have such calamities happened, without a very apparent cause, arising from the wickedness of the people?---When God visited London with a Plague, which in a few days carried off, so many thousands

<sup>a</sup> Act. 2. 23.      <sup>b</sup> Luke. 13. 35.      <sup>c</sup> Luke. 19. 43.

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lands of the inhabitants; and soon afterwards the  
dreadful fire consumed most of the City; the  
hand of Providence was very visible in both;  
and they who have made observations, concern-  
ing the temper and behaviour of that time, will  
in the strongest Manner assure us, "That Iniqui-  
ty sat triumphant on the *Throne*, and spread it-  
self thro' every rank of the *subject*: Impiety  
"profaneness debauchery and the love of Pleasure,  
"abounded in most places; while seriousness and  
"Religion were discountenanced, the worship of  
"God neglected, and the more holy and exem-  
plary a man's life was, the more he was the  
"Object of general hatred."

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Shall I mention to you, also, as well as the  
judgments of God upon nations and collective  
Bodies of people, his punishments inflicted on  
particular persons for Sin? such as---of *Lot's*  
*Wife*, who for looking back with desire after her  
possessions in Sodom, was turned into a *Pillar of*  
*Salt*.<sup>a</sup> Of the Man under the Law, who *for gather-*  
*ing Sticks on the Sabbath-Day*, was by the com-  
mand of God *stoned to death*<sup>b</sup> ---Of *Achan* who  
for theft suffered the same punishment<sup>c</sup> ---  
of *Korah, Dathan, and Abiram*, whom the Earth  
*swallowed up alive*<sup>d</sup> ---of *Absalom*, in whom the  
providence of God, remarkably punished an un-  
dutiful Son, and an incestuous adulterer<sup>e</sup> --- of  
the children who mocked the venerable Prophet  
*Elisha*,

a Gen. 19. 26.      b Numb. 15. 32.      c Joshua 7. 25.  
d Numb. 26. 10.      e 2 Sam. XIV &c.

*Elisha, and of whom, the She-Bears slew forty and two*<sup>a</sup>... of *Ahab*, whose idolatry and murder of Naboth, brought down the judgment of Heaven on him, which hurried him into eternity<sup>b</sup>... of *Jezebel*, who for her wickedness was devoured by dogs<sup>c</sup>... of *Ananias and Sapphira*, who having lied to the Holy Ghost, for that crime fell down dead<sup>d</sup>... And of *Herod*, who was eaten up of worms.<sup>e</sup> Each of these instances contains an alarming proof, of the Divine displeasure; and they are left on record in the BIBLE, for the instruction of the ages to come; they speak to us, and exhort us to learn wisdom from them.

What else shall we conclude too, concerning many a case which falls within our own knowledge, tho' alafs! but little regarded by a vain and inattentive world?——When *one* gets drunk, and in consequence of this sin, he is killed; being stupified and insensible, he falls down and his neck is broke, or else he is drowned; is not this a judgment of God?---- When *another* goes out to break the sabbath; to find his own pleasure on GOD's holy day,<sup>f</sup> and in so doing comes to an untimely-end; he goes out, but never returns home again; is not this a judgment of God for prophaning his day?--- When *a third* in the wickedness of his heart, curses and swears, and calls for damnation, on himself and his fellow-Men; and instantly his breath is stopped, and his

a 2 Kings. 2. 23.

d Acts. 5. 5.

b 1 Kings. 21. 12.

e Acts. 12. 23.

c 2 Kings. 9. 35.

f Is. 58; 13.



his Soul dislodged, ( a Fact not merely *suppose-able*; but I fear which too commonly takes place, in *midnight-revels, drunken-quarrels, duels &c.* ) may not this also be properly called a judgment?---Does it not contain such a warning?---And when Men join themselves to bad-company, and with bad company proceed to bad courses, which are finished at the Gallows; ---or having laid the Reins on the necks of their corruptions, run blindly the round of sensual delights; until they fall at last a sacrifice, to the gratification of irregular-passions, and perish by the hand of their vices; may we not read in the exit of such sinners, *that the end of those things is Death*<sup>a</sup>? yes! Depend upon it, that whatever the crime be, which either immediately or in it's effects, is so visibly marked by Affliction or Death; God is not unconcerned therein; and we must consider him, as inflicting punishment for sin there; unless we would maintain, that He disregards sin; or that He is an indolent spectator of human-actions.

Nor is the late melancholy disaster in Chester, the only one of *that* kind that has occurred.---Such examples I might say with justice, are not unfrequent; though thro' the levity of the Heart, and the deceitfulness of sin; they make but a feeble impression, and are speedily forgot.---One however is so nearly similar to it, that I hope need not make an apology, for relating it to you.

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"At

\* “ At *Barnwell* a village near *Cambridge*, an  
 “ *Annual-Fair* is kept:---And upon one of these  
 “ Occasions, in *September* 1727, a Puppet-Show  
 “ was set up in a Barn; to which some genteel  
 “ people, and many of a lower-rank resorted.---  
 “ Adjoining was a stack of Hay.---A Man sought  
 “ admittance to the Show, but could not obtain  
 “ it.---And ( whether in attempting to climb the  
 “ Hay-Stack with a light in his hand, or whether  
 “ as has been said thro’ malice ) he set the Hay  
 “ on fire; and immediately the Barn was in  
 “ flames.---The people within were alarmed; and  
 “ rushing furiously to the door, prevented it  
 “ from opening.---Endeavours from the outside  
 “ to burst it open, were not effectual, time  
 “ enough to save them :---All was Terror and  
 Confusion;---

If however, there needs an apology, to the *Reader*, for  
 inserting this story in a *Sermon*, I would observe that I saw great pro-  
 priety in introducing it in preaching, and I knew not how to omit  
 it in printing the *Sermon*. — I have heard of a like Instance at  
*Carlisle* attended with very fatal and melancholy consequences:  
 and a more recent one, in *this Year* at *Amsterdam* VIZ.

“ Tuesday May 12 about 8 in the Evening, a Sudden and most  
 “ alarming fire broke out in the Play-House, when the company of  
 “ Flemish-Comedians were performing to a crowded audience. —  
 “ The confusion which this occasioned, no words can express. —  
 “ In crowding to escape, many limbs were broken, and some lives  
 “ lost. — Several persons of high rank in the boxes, perished in the  
 “ flames; more were suffocated; because the rapid progress of the  
 “ fire rendred it impossible to afford them any relief. — It is not  
 “ known how it happened.” *Gentleman’s Magazine for May*. 1772.

Confusion;---The roof fell in;---And only *six* out of an *hundred and thirty* escaped.---The rest were smothered or burnt to Death."-----

What shall we say to these things?---The ways of God are unsearchable; and it doth not become us to pry curiously into the Councils of Infinite Wisdom.---Rather let us stand at a distance; and in silence tremble and adore.---Yet, may we not without presumption ask, is there anything for *us* to learn from such Dispensations?---Have they no intention?---Shall we suffer them to pass unnoticed?---Or shall we think lightly of them?---Shall we crowd them among the ordinary vicissitudes of Life?---Or if they move us at all: shall we just,---put up a sigh,---drop a tear,---say they are dreadful,---And let them pass into Oblivion?---Shall we dismiss them as soon as we can; and as easily forget them, as people in common do?---O no! If they come not by chance, there must be an important meaning in them. *The Lord speaketh once, yea twice, by one method and by another, tho' Man perceiveth it not.*<sup>a</sup>---There are very useful lessons held forth, in each of the dealings of God. Whether prosperous or adverse, they are full of meaning:---Not one Mercy that we receive; not one Pain that we feel, but preaches most significantly to us.---And these *terrible things of GOD*, have a voice to themselves, peculiarly weighty and forcible.---May God incline our hearts to

B 2

listen

<sup>a</sup> Job. 33. 14.



listen to the instruction!---And from *his judgments in the earth, may the inhabitants of the world learn righteousness!*-----I am now to consider,

II. What that *righteousness* is, which these and the like affecting dispensations teach us,---  
And,

Doubtless there are duties of *humanity*, which every spectacle of misery leads to. Every species of grief, ought to excite the tear of sympathy; and the tender feelings of the benevolent heart, will take pleasure, in the most friendly efforts, for the relief of the sufferer. *Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep.*<sup>a</sup> ¶---But surely, mercy and compassion are not the *only* emotions, which Providences thus circumstanced, are intended to awaken.---Pity and tenderness towards our Fellow-Men, tho' truly laudable, yet are not the only duties, which *they* are intended to enforce. There are other very needful instructions, *respecting ourselves*, deducible from them.

GOD forbid, that we should trust in ourselves that we are righteous, and despise others! That

<sup>a</sup> Rom. 12. 15.

¶ It is greatly to the honour of the *Faculty*, and the *Gentry* in *Chester*; who have so kindly interested, and so generously distinguished themselves, for the relief of the surviving sufferers; and for the assistance of those families, that have lost their principal support, by the explosion.

we should fancy ourselves more deserving, because no such grievous calamity has befallen *us*! --- This would be a horrid abuse of Divine Goodness. --- This temper would discover, a most lamentable ignorance of ourselves; --- Of the depravity of our Nature; and of our numerous offences. --- No! --- *By the grace of GOD, we are what we are.* --- *Let us not be high-minded but fear;* and be thankful, that *the Lord hath not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.*<sup>a</sup> --- Yet happy is he that learns caution from other Men's misfortunes. --- There is in the Providence I am particularly discoursing of, a solemn admonition to the inhabitants of Chester; --- A solemn admonition to the country round it; --- A solemn admonition to those that were in the confusion, but whose Lives are mercifully spared; --- A solemn admonition to young People; --- A solemn admonition to Parents and Heads of Families, to Masters and to Servants; --- There is a solemn admonition in it, to all that hear of it. --- The language of it is, *How long ye simple ones will ye love simplicity? and the scorers delight in their scorning? and fools hate knowledge? Turn you at this reproof: --- Incline your ear unto wisdom, and apply your heart unto understanding. Discretion shall preserve thee, and understanding shall keep thee.*<sup>c</sup> so the word *righteousness* in my text intimates, that the advice held forth in these dispensations,

is

a Ps 103. 10.

b Prov. 1. 22.

c Prov. 2. 2. 11.

is something good and fit, something suitable and highly proper for us to learn.--- It now remains therefore, that I endeavour to point out, what that instruction afforded us is. and,

I. By such awakening Providences, we are taught, *the Holiness and Purity of the most High GOD.*---That in him is light, and in him is no darkness at all, <sup>a</sup> perfect rectitude and no error.--- That God is an infinitely holy and just Being;--- *a GOD of truth, and without iniquity.* <sup>b</sup>--He taketh not pleasure in wickedness, *neither shall evil dwell with him.* <sup>c</sup>---Sin is that abominable thing which he hateth.--- And tho' he bears long, and is rich in his mercy;---tho' judgment is his *strange work*, and he is not every day giving, awful demonstrations of his displeasure;---tho' sentence <sup>a</sup> against an evil work, may not be executed speedily; and therefore the heart of the sons of men, be fully set in them to do evil; yet judgment sleeps not. *GOD is angry with the wicked every day.* <sup>d</sup> Sinners are *treasuring up wrath against a day of wrath* <sup>e</sup>: and unless mercy prevent, and they are turned from the power of Satan unto God; this wrath will e're long, burst upon their guilty heads; and they will perish without remedy.---

Men may laugh now; They may think "it is  
"the Parsons trade to talk of damnation, but we  
"will

<sup>a</sup> John. 1. 5.    <sup>b</sup> Deut. 32. 4.    <sup>c</sup> Ps. 5. 4.  
<sup>d</sup> Ps. 7. 11.    <sup>e</sup> Rom. 2. 5.



"will not hear him;" They may sit in the seat, of the scorners; and be permitted for a while, to harden their necks; but *wo to him that striveth with his maker*; <sup>a</sup>--- When the Lord contends with them, how will they answer him? Ah Brethren! *It is a fearful thing, to fall into the hands of the living GOD.* <sup>b</sup> In the day of his anger, who will be able to stand?----

While then, his judgments are in the earth: While others are set forth as fearful warnings to you; do look back, upon your own past lives;---- do reflect, upon your numerous offences;---- do recollect, "all your vanity and thoughtlessness,--- "your *minding earthly things*,---your *love of pleasures, more than love of GOD*, <sup>c</sup>---your neglect of "prayer, and the worship of God,---your contempt of his holy word, of the calls, of the "threatnings, of the promises of the BIBLE,---- "your indulgence of the lusts, of your wicked "and corrupt hearts,---your ready yielding to "the temptations of the Devil, the spirit that "worketh in the children of disobedience,--- "your cursing and swearing and drunkenness,--- "your prophanation of the Lords-day,---your "sins against light and knowledge:-----Let conscience speak and tell, how great your guilt has been; how you have been rebuked from the pulpit, and yet you disobeyed: How frequently it has itself, remonstrated against your behaviour,

B 4

and

<sup>a</sup> Is. 45. 9.    <sup>b</sup> Heb. 10. 31.    <sup>c</sup> Phil. 3. 19.    <sup>d</sup> 1 Tim. 3. 4

and yet you persisted in it.---O! may it speak loudly and effectually!---What if for all these things, GOD had brought you into judgment?---What if in the commission of any of these sins, your soul had been called hence?---What if the Lord had commanded, *Put in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe; his wickedness is exceeding great. a Cut him down, why cumbreth he the ground? b*---You would not then, have been here to hear the gospel;---not now here, to be called upon and exhorted;---not here, to hear of mercy and salvation;---you would have been past mercy, for ever and ever;---you would have been cursing your wretched existence in hopeless misery.---And do not you shudder at the view, of your dreadful situation?---Well my friends; GOD is still a holy GOD; still jealous of his honour; and they who die in sin, will to their everlasting astonishment find him, *a consuming fire*.---Better were it, that a mill-stone were hanged about a man's neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea; than to lie under the wrath of of an incensed GOD.---Death puts an end, to the most exquisite of worldly sorrows.---If a man is godly in CHRIST JESUS, his troubles in this life, are all the troubles, that he will ever know;---and these are comparatively speaking, *but for a moment*. But the pains of Hell are everlasting; *there their worm* (the gnawing worm of a guilty, and wounded conscience)  
*dieth*

*dieth not ; and the fire is not quenched.*<sup>a</sup> The breath of the Lord, like a stream of brimstone doth kindle it.----What is the proper improvement of these alarming truths?----Why, *fear him, who is able to destroy both soul and body in Hell.*<sup>b</sup>----*Acquaint now thyself with him, and be at peace.*<sup>c</sup>----*Agree with thine adversary quickly, while thou art in the way with him.*<sup>d</sup>----Go and earnestly beg of GOD, to be reconciled to you ; nor rest, till you have some good hope thro' grace of it.----*Kiss the Son lest he be angry with you ; by faith, embrace the Almighty Saviour ; bow to his sceptre, and seek his mercy, before his wrath is kindled, and you perish from the way.*<sup>e</sup> of life.----All they that are *as far from him shall perish.*<sup>f</sup> O ! is it not right and fit then ; highly proper and expedient that we should learn *this* instruction?----May GOD teach us, by his righteous judgments, and by the power of his Holy Spirit!----

II. Another very necessary and useful part of instruction, in these dispensations of Providence, is concerning *the true nature of Sin.*----For instance, the evil of Sin in general, is hereby manifest.----As we have before observed, that it is the Root, of all the Bitterness in the world ; do not the miseries, which we see and which we feel, abundantly demonstrate sin, to be exceeding sinful. And when public spectacles of terror,

<sup>a</sup> Mark. 9. 44.  
Mat. 5. 25.

<sup>b</sup> Mat. 10. 28.  
<sup>e</sup> Ps. 2. 12.

<sup>c</sup> Job. 22. 21.  
<sup>f</sup> Ps. 73. 27.



ror, are thus exhibited; do they not very strikingly prove, that the glory of Man is departed, his dignity is laid low, and a wo come unto him because of his sin.---If the Lord is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works,<sup>a</sup>---If he doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of Men;<sup>b</sup> then how evil must that be, which has provoked God so to do! which has dishonoured his government; which has violated his holy law; and is the sad source of all our troubles!--May we not read the heinousness of the crime, in the severity of the punishment?---And much more should we behold of its deformity; had we the invisible world unveiled to us, and could we learn, from the language of condemned souls there, the weighty signification, of that tremendous declaration of scripture, *the wages of sin is Death.*<sup>c</sup>---Nor this only but,

From such Providences may be discerned, the true nature of certain actions, which the Generality are very loath, to allow *sinful*.---We live in a Day of great declension, lukewarmness and conformity to this World.---Not only is Religion rejected by the openly prophane; but its Interests are wounded and betrayed, by too many of its professed friends.---Hence many an indulgence, which our Pious-Ancestors conscientiously refrained from, is now thought mighty harmless and innocent.---They are not indeed pleaded for,

as

a . Ps. 14 . 17.

b Lam. 3. 33.

c Rom. 6. 23.

as positively commendable; yet are maintained not to be absolutely unlawful: They are supposed rather, to lie in the middle; to bear a kind of indifference; as if there were some actions, neither pleasing nor displeasing to God: And as a good Man expresses it, "by this method of arguing, it has come to pass, that half those practices are not thought Sins, by the professing world now, which were thought Sins an hundred years ago." \*

But set the fear of God, for a moment before your eyes.---View these gratifications in the light of another world; and see how the cheat is detected!---how they are stript of their false colours!---And what an appearance they make!--- "Would you like to go from a *Card-Table*, immediately to the *Bed of Death*?---Would you like to go from a *Horse-Race*, into *Eternity*?---Would you like to go from the *Play-House*, to the *Bar of Almighty God*?---or from a *Puppet-Show*, to the *Judgment Seat of Christ*?---No you would not.---And if these appear unwelcome exercises to *die* in; sure they are improper to *live* in; as we know not at what moment we may die.---O Brethren! one serious heart-affecting thought of *Death* and *Eternity*, will silence a thousand of the Reasonings, of the carnal-mind, however plausible; And (besides what I have already suggested, concerning the immorality of our Public-

\* Wither'spoon's serious Apology for the Characteristics.

Public-Entertainments ) the uncertainty of Life, is alone a sufficient proof, to a serious humble soul, that such amusements are not taught, by that Grace that bringeth Salvation; as they cannot by any means consist, with *waiting all the days of our appointed time, 'till our change comes.* <sup>a</sup>

Take the advice of God himself then.---Hear what his Holy Word says unto you.--- "*Pass the time of your short Pilgrimage here in fear.* <sup>b</sup> --- "*Be sober and watch unto prayer; for the end of all things is at hand* <sup>c</sup> --- *Abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the Soul,* <sup>d</sup> and make "*no provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof.* <sup>e</sup> --- *Avoid even the appearance, and near approach to Evil,* <sup>f</sup> because Sin is a slippery-road; and he that ventures, knows not to what extremes "*it may carry him.* --- *Be not envious against evil Men, neither desire to be with them.* <sup>g</sup> --- *If sinners entice thee, consent thou not;* <sup>h</sup> --- *He that walketh uprightly walketh surely, but he that is perverse in his ways shall fall.*" <sup>i</sup> That Man has no ground, to expect the countenance, the protection and blessing of God, who is not found in the Lord's way.--- *Forsake then, the foolish and live.* <sup>k</sup> Pray earnestly for that spirit, by which ye may *mortify the deeds of the Body,* <sup>l</sup> and make it your chief concern to be *ready; for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of Man cometh.* <sup>m</sup> But this leads me to a

### III. Particular;

<sup>a</sup> Job. 14. 14.   <sup>b</sup> 1 Pet. 1. 17.   <sup>c</sup> 1 Pet. 4. 7.   <sup>d</sup> 1 Pet. 2. 11.  
<sup>e</sup> Rom. 13. 14.   <sup>f</sup> Thes. 5. 22.   <sup>g</sup> Prov. 24. 1.   <sup>h</sup> Prov. 1. 10.  
<sup>i</sup> Prov. 28. 18.   <sup>k</sup> Prov. 9. 6.   <sup>l</sup> Rom. 8. 13.   <sup>m</sup> Mat. 24. 44



III. Particular; which will more abundantly evince, the propriety of these exhortations; and and is a very useful part of instruction taught us, by such dispensations of Providence as we are discoursing of, I mean, *In what an unhappy and unsafe State, are unconverted Sinners!*---Sinners we all are; we have each of us sinned against God, and affronted the Majesty of Heaven and Earth: And yet, there is a very important distinction to be made, between *some* and *others*: of us: ---Some of us have been convinced of the worth of their Souls; of their danger by Sin;---and are most earnestly and solicitously, seeking their salvation: ---Others are unconvinced of their danger, and unconcerned about their safety; as appears, by their carelessly neglecting, the proper and only means of salvation: ---Some have believed thro' grace; are justified, and at peace with God; others are unbelieving and have neither part nor lot in this matter: ---Some are turned from the service of sin, to the service of the most High; the others still delight in sin, and are under its dominion. --- These last are unconverted and unregenerate sinners; and such (O did they but see it!) are in a most deplorably dangerous state.

The people, whose Death we now lament, and are endeavouring to improve, little thought on entering the *fatal-Room*, that they had scarce an hour to live. --- The cause of their Death was concealed from them. --- They had no suspicion  
of

of its existence. ---- Nor Brethren, do any of us know, that *we* have an hour to live. ---- At farthest, there is but a step between us and Death. --- We are crushed before the moth. ---- Our breath is in our nostrils; just ready as it were, to take its flight, to an unknown world. --- Consider the complex frame of our Bodies, and how suddenly might the wheels of nature stop! ---- Consider the brittleness of our frame, and how easily is it disordered! -- how easily might an everlasting period, be put to its motion! ---- Since sin entered into the world, the instruments of Death are on every side of us; ---- The food we eat; the air we breathe; those things which we find necessary, for the support of our Lives, as long as God pleases; yet are all furnished, with the means of our dissolution, whenever he gives permission. ---- Dangers stand thick all around us, to push us into the Grave. ---- In the midst of Life, we are, in Death. ---- The wonder would not be that any of us should die: The wonder is rather, that any of us do live.

Having obtained help of God, we continue unto this day; but who knoweth the hour of his Death? ---- And if so, then what a critical! ---- what a dangerous! --- what a desperate situation are the wicked in! ---- The true wisdom teaches constantly to eye Death, and to be prepared to meet God; but *these* deluded souls, are airy and vain; foolish and inconsiderate; and while in the midst of danger, they slumber as thoughtless, as if they were in the most perfect security. ---- Ah! What perverseness in human-nature must that be,  
which

which leads Men thus, to be their own enemies!— Which has blinded the eyes of multitudes, that they have not been aware of their danger, 'till they were ruined beyond recovery!

The Man is in danger we have seen already, while engaged in acts of sin; --- And when I may add, is he out of danger?--- Is not his whole life a life of sin?--- Is not his heart *Enmity against GOD?* <sup>a</sup> --- Is he not destitute of the love of God? --- And has a Person in such a state, any reason to hope for the favour of God? --- No! *He that believeth not, is an object of God's displeasure, and the wrath of GOD abideth on him.* <sup>b</sup> In what a dreadful uncertainty then does he live! There is but a thin veil, between him and the eternal world. --- He hangs by a very slender thread, over a tremendous Gulph. --- He hovers unthinkingly, over the bottomless-pit. --- And was the feeble thread of Life but broke; he would fall by the weight of his guilt into it, never to rise again; --- eternal darkness and despair would overwhelm him; and the smoke of his torments ascend up for ever and ever. <sup>c</sup> --- How little worthy then, of the smallest degree of envy, would he be; were he *now*, Lord of the whole Globe; --- could he command the earth, and the fulness thereof! --- Would his grandeur be any thing else than splendid misery?

Imminent is the sinner's danger at all times. --- Asleep, awake, at home, abroad, --- every moment

<sup>a</sup> Rom. 8. 7.

<sup>b</sup> John. 3. 36.

<sup>c</sup> Rev. 14. 11.



ment his soul is exposed to infinite Hazard.---- And what prudent Man would chuse to run such a Risque ? ---- Not one. ---- Herein is the stupidity and madness of sin manifest,---Herein the treachery and inconsistency of the carnal heart ; that the very Creatures who profess to seek hapiness ; and who use the greatest diligence and circumspection, for the things that are *temporal* ; do at the same time discover, the most amazing and pitiable folly, respecting those things that are *eternal*,<sup>a</sup> ---- Do, my friends, have compassion on yourselves, and pray God to have compassion on you !---- Why will ye be obstinate and perish ?---- Who but a fool, would refuse Life and love Death ?---- Void of understanding must he be truly, absolutely *dead in sin*,<sup>b</sup> and insensible of his real Interest ; who can prefer this unsafe and unhappy state ; to the safety and happiness of the people of God ; to the pleasure and security of the Divine and Spiritual-Life.----It is that *Life*, in all its rich, its glorious, and extensive nature ; that I am now to set before you in the,

IV. And last place ; and intreat you in the most earnest manner to seek it, as the *most important part* of that *righteousness*, which the text inculcates.-----When we see dreadful appearances of God's resentment against sin ;----When Death puts on unusual terrors, and in the twinkling of an eye, removes multitudes into the Grave ; it is a very just and pertinent, ( and did not

<sup>a</sup> 2 Cor. 4. 18.

<sup>b</sup> Eph. 2. 1.

not experience prove the contrary, I would say a very *natural* ) enquiry for us, suppose death thus visits me; how shall I be ready for it? Nor is it a question proper and necessary, merely as considered in the view of death; but also, in the view of the many changes and trials, we are subject to in this world. "When sorrows of various kinds sorely oppress us, what hope shall we have, what to sustain our minds in such a dark season? This momentous question in both its views, the prophet answers, in the 3d. verse of this chapter: *Thou wilt keep him* (says he to God) *in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee; because he trusteth in thee;* and in the 12th verse; *Lord thou wilt ordain peace for us: for thou also hast wrought all our works for us,* An unruffled composure of mind, or an uninterrupted freedom from affliction, the prophet did not mean by this *peace*; for that would contradict fact, and the expectation of it would be vain. Many are the afflictions of even the righteous. <sup>a</sup> --even they are sometimes, in heaviness thro' many tribulations; <sup>b</sup> but at times also, they have a peace and consolation in their souls that passeth all understanding; <sup>c</sup> and their state is allways a safe one. The peace between them and their God is perfect and unchangeable:--- Nothing can separate them from the love of GOD, <sup>d</sup> and therefore nothing can hurt or destroy them, tho' it may be suffered for a while to molest them --- *If GOD be for them, who can be against them?* <sup>a</sup> --- O! happy the people that are in such a case;

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case;

<sup>a</sup> Ps. 34. 19. <sup>b</sup> 1 Pet. 1. 6. <sup>c</sup> Phil. 4. 7. <sup>d</sup> Rom. 8. 35.



case; happy are the people whose GOD is the Lord! <sup>a</sup>---

This is that rest and security, that I would recommend to your earnest regard. --- Let me then, after shewing you the necessity of it, point out the way in which GOD is reconciled to sinners; and you only can enjoy his love. --- Let me tell you of the infinite love of the Father, who pitied sinners, and formed the plan of their salvation. --- Let me speak to you of the love; of the allsufficient, and everlasting righteousness; of the infinitely meritorious sufferings, and Death of the Son of GOD; who was GOD manifest in the flesh; <sup>b</sup> and who purchased his church with his own most precious blood, <sup>c</sup> --- Let me speak to you, of the Almighty and efficacious influences, of the Holy-Spirit of GOD; which are able to enlighten the darkest mind; to soften the hardest heart; to bow the most obstinate will; to sanctify the most corrupt inclinations; to purify you from the mire, the dross of sin and sense; to raise your minds from earthly to heavenly things; and fix them there, where JESUS sitteth at the right-hand of GOD. <sup>d</sup> --- Shall I speak to you of the pleasures of communion with GOD in the way of Duty? --- of the light of his countenance, and the joys of his salvation? --- How mean and groveling, do the highest and most refined; the sweetest and most engaging, of the delights of this world appear, to a christian, that has fellowship with the Father, and with his Son JESUS CHRIST! <sup>e</sup> --- Shall I speak to you of the comfort, that arises from the

<sup>a</sup> Ps. 144. 15. <sup>b</sup> 1 Tim. 3. 16. <sup>c</sup> Acts. 20. 28 <sup>d</sup> Col. 3. 1. <sup>e</sup> 1 John. 1. 3.



the hope, that the most High is our Father and our GOD: that he has in CHRIST *made with us, an everlasting covenant, well ordered in all things and sure?* <sup>a</sup> How happy to be enabled humbly to look to the throne of grace, and in the exercise of faith to say *my Lord!* and *my GOD!* <sup>b</sup> ---- Shall I call to your minds also, the benefit of these truths; this sense of things; this experience of Divine grace, in a season of outward perplexity and difficulty? ---- When the burden is too heavy for you to bear, then to cast it on the Lord; ---- yea to *cast all your care on him, because he careth for you;* <sup>c</sup> ---- is not this desirable? ---- How quiet and serene; yea how triumphant too, has it often made the bed of Death! ---- smoothed the frightful visage of the King of Dread; softened his stern countenance; ---- taken away his sting; ---- and given him a friendly aspect, so that the Christian has welcomed him, and not retreated from him. -- And let me lastly, set before your eyes, that *Inheritance, incorruptible, undefiled, and which fadeth not away, reserved in Heaven for the people of GOD;* and which GOD has promised by his power, to keep them thro' faith unto. <sup>d</sup> ---- O! the blessedness of that man, whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered, unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity,<sup>e</sup> and whose heart is right with GOD! ----

Here Christians! is your triumph. ---- Here Sinners! is your only refuge. ---- All these great and exalted blessings the Gospel sets before you ---- All these it calls upon you, to seek and press after; and assures you, that *every one who in earnest seeketh*

<sup>a</sup> 2 Sam. 23. 5.

<sup>b</sup> John. 20. 28.

<sup>c</sup> 1 Pet. 5. 7

<sup>d</sup> 1 Pet. 1. 4. 5.

<sup>e</sup> Ps. 32. 1. 2.

*seeketh, most certainly findeth.* O may the Lord make you in real earnest about them; by shewing you deeply the need that you have of them!----Would you be blessed, Brethren, here and hereafter; in time and to all eternity? Hear then the voice of the Son of God, and live.----Embrace the glad news of mercy and salvation.----Go and beg grace to convince you of sin, and make you humble;---faith to believe on the Lord JESUS CHRIST; a new heart, and a right spirit to be put within you :----They are essential parts of your salvation; and they are all *the gift of GOD*, thro' the power of his Holy-Spirit.----O may you thus flee, from the bitterness of sin in this world; and from the wrath, to come in the future world! O may you do it immediately, while Mercy speaks unto you !----As a farther motive to excite you to this, let me conclude with directing your thoughts, to the solemnity and to the consternation, of that *terrible day of the Lord*, when the Lord JESUS himself shall descend, in *flaming fire*, to be *admired by all them that believe; and to take vengeance, on them that know him not, and obey not his Gospel.* ----How doleful in that day, to be numbered with the transgressors!----And on the other hand, how transporting then to lift up our heads, and see that our redemption is accomplished; to be acknowledged by CHRIST as *his own*; and to be, with GOD for ever!----*Who so is wise, and will observe these things; even they shall understand the loving-kindness of the Lord.*<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup> 2 Thes. 1. 8.

<sup>b</sup> Ps. 107. 43.

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